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ABSTRACT

Nine ways for school executives to provide essential support for their superintendent's concept of the management team are: (1) speaking positively about the superintendent when talking to teachers, parents, students, and members of the community; (2) keeping the superintendent informed of events, achievements, and problems; (3) seeking the superintendent's counsel in solving major problems; (4) suggesting specific means for improving communications; (5) letting the superintendent know what other people are saying about the schools and school leadership; (6) acknowledging disagreements; (7) refraining from going directly to school board members with concerns or suggestions; (8) talking with other administrators about negative comments attributed to them; and (9) being a team player. (JW)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

If you would preserve the management team, you must pitch in and do your part

WHEN IT COMES to being good team players, we principals sometimes aren't much different from the kids in our schools: We go along with the idea of the management team as long as the decisions go *our* way; when they don't, watch out. We know every trick in the book for dragging our feet and undermining the entire system.

The management team concept works well in schools when all members of the team support and respect one another and pull together to reach common goals. It *doesn't* work when individual members resort to bad-mouthing and backbiting because they disagree with a decision—whether it's a group decision or a decision by the superintendent, who after all is head of the management team.

Consider this scenario: An assistant principal, disgruntled with the superintendent's latest public relations strategy, goes directly to several school board members to inform them he has it "on good authority" that the superintendent is not communicating well with important local politicians. They should treat the superintendent's proposals and opinions with a jaundiced eye, he advises, lest they lose touch with the community's movers and shakers.

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If that situation sounds unlikely, consider one that happens far more often: A principal whose job is to convey a team decision to teachers introduces it by saying, "I don't agree with this, but the superintendent wants us to . . ."

Whether blatant or subtle, such rearguard actions erode both the superintendent's effectiveness as an education leader and the effectiveness of the management team. And if left unchecked by other members of the team (yes, I'm saying that other administrators who are aware of the backbiting should do something about it), this behind-the-scenes activity might result not only in the superintendent's demise, but also in the doom of any future team effort in the school system.

My proposal, then, for my fellow school executives is to make a conscious effort to support your superintendent's concept of the management team. Without your support, your schools are unlikely to enjoy a fully functioning management team. Here are nine ways to provide that essential support:

1. Speak positively about the superintendent to teachers, parents, students, and members of the community. And if you can't say something nice . . .

2. Keep the superintendent informed of events, achievements, and problems at your school.

3. Seek the superintendent's counsel in solving major problems, and inform the superintendent of the solution you've chosen.

4. Suggest specific means by which the superintendent can improve communications with the management team and others in the school system.

5. Let the superintendent know what other people are saying—good or bad—about the schools and school leadership (without revealing names, unless you have permission to do so).

6. Have the guts to disagree openly with the superintendent. But do so internally, keeping your concerns inside the administrative family.

7. Refrain from going directly to school board members with your concerns or suggestions, especially for the purpose of gaining influence or favor with the board.

8. Talk with other administrators about negative comments attributed to them, pointing out the potential damage their statements can cause.

9. Above all, be a team player. Offer solutions to school system problems, but support the final decision—even if the superintendent chooses an avenue other than the one you or the team would have selected.

The management team can be a magnificent machine or a miserable flop. It can have something in it for everyone, or little in it for anyone. Its destiny rests with each member's willingness to work for the welfare of every other team member as well as for the goals of the entire school system. ■

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